




**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**Bureau of the Census**  
Washington, DC 20233-0001

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**DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM SERIES CC-5**

**MEMORANDUM FOR** Brian Monaghan  
Lead Assistant Division Chief for Censuses  
Field Division

**Attention:** Management Training Branch  
Field Division

**From:** Howard Hogan   
Chief, Decennial Statistical Studies Division

**Prepared By:** Erin Whitworth

**Subject:** Observation of Coverage Improvement Follow-Up  
Oklahoma City, OK, on July 24-25, 2000

**I Description of Enumeration Area/Environment**

Oklahoma City is one of the two largest cities geographically in the U.S. There are main streets in a grid pattern of square miles. On the first day, I observed operations in the southwest quadrant of the city, and on the second day, I observed in the outlying areas of a suburb, Edmond, which is also laid out in the same grid fashion. The street patterns were helpful for easy-to-locate addresses (for the most part).

**II General Observations Related to Observations in Oklahoma City**

Before my visit, I told the LCO manager (LCOM) that I wanted to accompany an enumerator in the field, and he suggested that I meet with a crew leader at the LCO before going out into the field. When I arrived at the LCO, I was introduced, and the crew leader and I proceeded to go to her area to find her enumerators. Apparently there

was a misunderstanding, because she had not made arrangements to meet with any of them, and we spent a great deal of time driving around a VERY large area looking for her enumerators' vehicles. We finally found one, and the enumerator and I set up a time later that afternoon when she had planned on continuing her enumeration. In the meantime, we searched for other enumerators, never finding anymore until we met at the prearranged time with the crew at one of the local McDonald's.

I accompanied the enumerator to an apartment complex. She had already been there before, and had left notices of visits, but nobody had called her back. We interviewed one young woman who was very responsive, but did not remember having received the census form.

At another apartment, we found a gentleman home, and the enumerator proceeded to ask the questions, and very quickly discovered that he had not lived in the apartment on April 1. She terminated the interview and thanked him for his time. She marked the form appropriately. I am not sure if she marked the unit as vacant on Census Day, but it is quite possible that it was occupied on Census Day with other occupants. She left a second notice of visit at another apartment.

### **III General Observations Related to Observations in Edmond**

On the second day, I had made it more clear to the LCOM that I wanted to spend the whole day with an enumerator and not a crew leader. I went to a local community center in Edmond where the crew leader met her crew, and I was introduced to the enumerator with whom I would be spending the day.

This enumerator I observed was obviously one of the more experienced workers. He knew the procedures well, except he forgot the privacy notices and therefore did not produce them at the beginning of each interview.

It was obvious as we started out that the map spots were not very well-marked. We spent a good deal of time searching for a particular address that did not exist on the ground, and that if it did, it was very well-hidden. These addresses were located in a rural area, and even though the streets were well-numbered, we had some difficulty finding all of the houses. There was one map spot that we could not find, and another house that was not on the map.

We went to one housing unit where the respondent said that she had already mailed in her census form, and the enumerator informed her that she would need to answer the questions again (it was a short form household). In answer to her bewilderment at having to answer the questions again, he explained that some housing units were chosen at random for quality purposes. While this was not true, it did ease her mind. However, as we were leaving the house, we drove down the other side of the driveway and saw a housing unit that turned out to be the one we had originally been looking for. The

enumerator could not figure out why the address had an extra letter on it, but that was explained by an abandoned house on the property. The census form should have been used on the abandoned house, but he had already used it on the previous housing unit. The enumerator in the rural area used some “unorthodox” methods in his enumerating. However, they seemed to have a positive impact. For instance, when leaving a notice of visit, he writes which visit it is (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, etc.). He mentioned to me that this gives a little “nudge” to the respondents to realize that he has been there various times. He also writes the housing unit address on the notice of visit, and he said this helps if the respondent calls him at home. Since the enumerator is rarely at home, he has an answering machine with a message requesting that those calling about census visits please leave their names and addresses. He has had cases where people call him back and simply leave the following message “This is so-and-so and I’m calling regarding your visit yesterday.” This does no good since the enumerator does not know the respondent’s name and the respondent did not leave an address. This enumerator also recounted some situations where the respondents were very irritated at having to answer the census, and he said that many times, while he listens to their tirade, he interjects questions into the conversation and the respondent unwittingly ends up answering the questionnaire. He said that sometimes people just want someone to listen to them.

#### **IV General Observations Related to the Interviewers Attitude about the Work**

Both enumerators I observed enjoyed their work, considered it honorable, and took pride in doing a good job. All of them indicated reservations at having to ask for the respondent’s race. For example, one of the enumerators I observed was interviewing an elderly woman, and as he went through the questionnaire, he said something like “And you’re white? You’re not Indian or anything?” To which the woman said, “Oh, well my so-and-so was Indian, and I am, too.” He ended up marking her as Native American, and wrote the appropriate tribe. I could tell that this was a difficult question for the enumerators to ask. It might be helpful to have an extra statement on the enumerator form such as “I need to ask you this question—what race do you consider yourself to be? Are you white, black, ...?”

#### **V General Comments from the LCO staff**

The AMFO (Assistant Manager for Field Operations) commented that he never saw any kind of documentation of “lessons learned” from the 1990 Census, and if there was such documentation, it was obviously not filtered down to the LCO level. He suggested that this type of documentation be provided to all LCOs. They also had administrative problems with transferring people between the ELCO and the LCO once the other LCOs opened up. They had some administrative problems with supervisors that took almost a full year to resolve. They had so many extra supplies that they shipped over three tons of material to the recycling center. They were understocked for NRFU, and the LCOM mentioned that the Shawnee office spent hundreds of dollars for professional printing

since they were also understocked and could not wait for more training kits to arrive. The offices that were set up for Wave 2 in CIFU had already sent some of their extra materials to Wave 1 offices that were short. By the time the Wave 2 offices started CIFU, they were short of materials. The LCOM mentioned that with the projected workload and the number of people to train, they should have received the correct number of supplies. Downloading was difficult for the LCO because only one computer was set up with Internet access (the LCOM's computer) and he could not always be there to help the employees get to the Internet.

## **VI Recommendations**

I recommend that there be "lessons learned" documentation given to all of the local offices in the future. Also, training and field materials should be sufficient for the projected workloads. In this case, they were not.

cc:

R. Harris (FLD)  
H. Palacios (KC RO)